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Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Environment Connecticut Program Director
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee
Friday, March 12, 2010

Supporting SB 388, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Economic And Environmental
Future

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony supporting SB 388. Environment Connecticut is a statewide, member-supported non-profit environmental advocacy organization. One of our top priorities in 2010 is promotion of policies to create and retain jobs in Connecticut's clean energy economy as well as other environmentally beneficial economic sectors. This legislation can be part of a comprehensive effort on the part of the General Assembly to promote good environmental policies that also create jobs and support our state's economic recovery efforts in 2010 and beyond.

We strongly support the provisions of SB 388 that would strengthen Connecticut's clean water, wildlife and habitat protection programs. The provisions of this bill that enable municipal stormwater authorities to fund measures reducing stormwater pollution would allow for innovative programs cutting water pollution and helping meet the state's Clean Water Act obligations. The bill's support for clean water infrastructure upgrades would also directly reduce pollution flowing into our rivers, streams and Long Island Sound while also supporting jobs constructing, maintaining and operating sewage treatment and other clean water infrastructure.

In addition to these measures, we urge the committee to consider complimentary policies that can benefit both Connecticut's economy and environment, including:

Clean Energy Jobs:

- Establish sustainable renewable energy incentive programs that move beyond limited direct subsidies in the form of grants and rebates. For example, HB 5362, AAC Renewable Energy establishes (in sections 3 and 4 of that bill) a market-based incentive program for development of over 300 megawatts of solar power in Connecticut. Such a mechanism would, at no cost to the state, support creation of over 1,200 new jobs tied to the solar industry in Connecticut. (Job-creation estimate based upon analysis by the non-profit group Vote Solar using the National Renewable Energy Laboratories PV Jobs and Economic Impacts Model.)

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- Authorize creation of bond-funded municipal clean energy and energy efficiency loan funds. Such a program, modeled on successful and innovative “Property Assessed Clean Energy” (PACE) initiatives in jurisdictions nationwide involves creation of revolving loan pools at the municipal and regional level. Such loan pools are funded through municipal bonding and used to offer low-interest loans to local homeowners and small businesses investing in clean energy systems and energy efficiency improvements.

Such programs provide the dual economic benefit of cutting energy bills for residential and business customers and promoting the creation and retention of local jobs in clean energy businesses.

- Create new “virtual net metering” programs allowing for community-based sharing of the benefits of solar, fuel cells, and other renewable energy generation systems between residents, businesses, houses of worship, and other customers within neighborhoods and municipalities. This allows consumers who otherwise would be unable to install renewable energy systems to gain benefits from such systems.

Agricultural Jobs:

- Establish a Farm Training & Infrastructure Match Program funded with a combined \$1.5 million in state bond funding and prioritizing programs eligible for federal matching funding. The program would provide grants supporting agriculture workforce training and capital investment benefiting Connecticut agricultural producers.

Transit-Oriented Jobs:

- Require the Department of Economic & Community Development and Connecticut Development Authority to prioritize granting of tax credits, business incentives, loans, etc., to businesses expanding operations and hiring employees at job sites located in proximity to existing bus and rail transit lines.

We urge your support for legislative proposals such as these that can stimulate growth of jobs in business sectors that benefit both the state’s environment and economy. Thank you again for the opportunity to offer this testimony and comments supporting SB 388.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps
Program Director
Environment Connecticut

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